

# Character Class

## Spellwarp Sniper -- Death from the Shadows

By Creighton Broadhurst



This column aims to provide players with tips on creating effective and interesting characters of various types. Whether you're a beginning player creating your very first character or an experienced gamer looking to put some punch into an old standby, this column is for you.

### Assets

Spellwarp snipers (*Complete Scoundrel* pg. 64) are excellent ranged combatants and masters of the surgical strike.

- **Good Will Saves:** A spellwarp sniper uses the best progression for Will saving throws (Table 3-1 in the *Player's Handbook*). Their arcane spellcasting levels boost this further, making them particularly good at resisting mind-affecting effects.
- **Good Class Skills:** Spellwarp snipers have many relevant class skills including Concentration, Hide, Move Silently, and Spellcraft. Additionally, they receive four skill points per level, which is a good, but not excellent, amount.
- **Spells:** Every level of spellwarp sniper provides the character with new spells per day as if the character had gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before becoming a spellwarp sniper.
- **Good Class Abilities:** At every class level, spellwarp snipers gain a useful special ability. At 1st level, spellwarp allows them to transform spells with an instantaneous duration and a range greater than touch into rays. At 2nd level, sudden raystrike enables them to inflict an extra 1d6 points of damage with rays to foes denied their Dexterity bonus to AC. (At 4th level, this increases to 2d6 points of damage). At 3rd level, they gain Precise Shot as a bonus feat, or another feat which has Point Blank Shot as the prerequisite if they already have Precise Shot. Finally, at 5th level, they attain unparalleled control over their ray spells with ray mastery. Ray mastery doubles the range at which they can inflict extra damage with sudden raystrike, allows them to *coup de grace* with a ray, and gives them the ability to empower a single ray spell per day as though they had applied the Empower Spell feat to it.
- **Easy Qualification:** Spellwarp sniper is an easy prestige class for which to qualify. One level of rogue or ninja takes care of the sneak attack or sudden strike criteria. Any ranged combat specialist should consider Point Blank Shot, while by the time the character is 5th level in an arcane spellcasting class, he should have the requisite ranks in Concentration and Spellcraft.



### Weaknesses

The spellwarp sniper's advantages come at a price. Here are a few things to consider when designing a spellwarp sniper character.

- **Average BAB:** Spellwarp snipers advance using the average base attack bonus progression. While their BAB is, therefore, far superior to a wizard's, they still lag behind fighters and other martial combatants. Their high Dexterity and reliance on ranged attacks requiring a ranged touch attack significantly offset this weakness, however.
- **Poor Fortitude Saves:** Spellwarp snipers have the worst progression for Fortitude saving throws in the game. It is likely that the classes taken to qualify for spellwarp sniper also have poor Fortitude saving throw

bonuses, making this their primary weakness.

- **Poor Reflex Saves:** Spellwarp snipers have the worst progression for Reflex saving throws in the game. Because they have levels in rogue or ninja, however, they already have a good base Reflex save. They also are likely to have good Dexterity scores, further offsetting this disadvantage.
- **Loss of Class Abilities:** Although advancing as a spellwarp sniper grants additional spellcasting abilities in one arcane spellcasting class, the character does not get any other benefits from that class. Therefore, spellwarp snipers with levels of wizard do not gain bonus wizard feats or additional abilities for their familiars.

## Playing a Spellwarp Sniper

People who play efficient spellwarp snipers should keep the following in mind.

### Character Build

Spellwarp snipers excel with ray spells. Because of this, from the *Player's Handbook*, a spellwarp sniper should consider taking Empower Spell (see sidebar), Improved Initiative, Improved Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, and Weapon Focus (ray). Other great choices for spellwarp snipers includes Ranged Spell Specialization (*Complete Arcane* pg. 82 -- ranged spells deal an extra 2 points of damage), Split Ray (*Complete Arcane* pg. 83 -- enables the user to fire an additional ray with specially prepared ray spells), and Ranged Recall (*Complete Mage* pg. 46 -- allows the reroll of missed attacks with ranged spells at a -5 penalty).

Finally, taking Great Fortitude offsets to some degree a spellwarp sniper's probably dismal Fortitude saving.

### Combat

In battle, spellwarp snipers should stay out of melee, using their spells (particularly their rays and spells modified with their spellwarp ability) to kill or disable individual, powerful opponents. When they run out of spells, they should switch to using ranged weapons, using their sneak attack or sudden strike ability as often as possible. Otherwise, their potential damage output is quite low.

### Recommended Spellwarp Sniper Spells

0 -- *acid splash, disrupt undead, ray of frost*  
1st -- *burning hands\*, color spray\*, ray of enfeeblement, true strike*  
2nd -- *cat's grace, scorching ray*  
3rd -- *fireball\*, lightning bolt\*, empowered ray of enfeeblement, ray of exhaustion*  
4th -- *dimensional anchor, enervation, shout\**  
5th -- *cone of cold\*, empowered fireball\*, empowered lightning bolt\*, waves of fatigue\**  
6th -- *disintegrate, globe of invulnerability, greater heroism*  
7th -- *spell turning, greater teleport*  
8th -- *polar ray, moment of prescience*  
9th -- *energy drain*

\* Modified with the spellwarp class ability. (The spellwarp class ability enables a spellwarp sniper to alter spells with an instantaneous duration and a range greater than touch into ray spells. Spells that originally required a Reflex save, such as *lightning bolt*, do not allow such a save when converted to ray form).

Spellwarp snipers probably have low hit points. They should counter this by getting their armor class as high as possible (by buying multiple low-power and cheap magical items bestowing different bonus types). Wise spellwarp snipers also purchase an *amulet of health* or learn *false life* to boost their hit points. *Gloves of dexterity* are also an excellent buy for a spellwarp sniper. If he has Weapon Finesse, the gloves boost his initiative modifier, armor class, Reflex saves, melee and ranged attacks, and numerous important skills including Hide, Move Silently, and Tumble.

Finally, spellwarp snipers must consider what kind of attacks they will likely suffer. Because they mostly stay out of melee, they are likely to be targeted by missile fire and spells. (Taking Deflect Arrows and Snatch Arrows allows a spellwarp sniper some additional, potent options when dealing with enemy missile fire). Because they normally strike from range, spellwarp snipers should use all available cover and concealment to reduce the efficacy of their opponent's attacks.

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## Sample Spellwarp Sniper: Aramil Liadon

*Tall and slender with pale, almost luminescent skin, this elf lurks in the shadows.*

### Aramil Liadon, CR 12

Male elf rogue 2/wizard 5/spellwarp sniper 5

NG Medium humanoid (elf)

**Init** +6; **Senses** low-light vision, Listen +8, Spot +13

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Elf, Giant, Orc, empathic link

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**AC** 22, touch 16, flat-footed 17; Dodge

(+5 Dex, +6 armor [*greater mage armor*], +1 deflection)

**hp** 70 (12 HD)

**Immune** sleep

**Resist** evasion

**Fort** +8, **Ref** +12, **Will** +8; +2 against enchantments

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**Speed** 30 ft. (6 squares)

**Ranged** ray spells +13 touch **Ranged** mwk composite shortbow +13/+8 (1d6+1/x3)

**Melee** mwk rapier +13/+8 (1d6+1/18-20)

**Base Atk** +6; **Grp** +7

**Atk Options** Point Blank Shot, ray mastery, sneak attack +1d6, spellwarp (maximum 5th), sudden raystrike +2d6

**Special Actions** ray mastery

**Combat Gear** *elemental gem (fire)*, *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*, scroll of empowered *ray of enfeeblement*

**Wizard Spells Prepared** (CL 10th; +12 ranged touch):

5th -- empowered *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *teleport*

4th -- *dimension door*, *greater invisibility*, *shout* (DC 17)

3rd -- *dispel magic*, *greater mage armor*\*, *fireball* (DC 16), empowered *ray of enfeeblement*

2nd -- *alter self*, *false life*\* (15 hp), *protection from arrows*, *scorching ray* (2)

1st -- *burning hands* (2) (DC 14), *mage armor*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *shield*

0 -- *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *read magic*, *touch of fatigue*

\* Already cast

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**Abilities** Str 12, Dex 22, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 8, Cha 10

**SQ** elf traits, rat familiar, trapfinding

**Feats** Dodge, Empower Spell, Great Fortitude, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (ray)

**Skills** Balance +13, Climb +6, Concentration +14, Disable Device +13, Hide +16, Intimidate +5, Jump +8, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Open Locks +13, Search +10, Spellcraft +18, Spot +13, Tumble +15

**Possessions** combat gear plus *gloves of dexterity* +4, *cloak of resistance* +1, *amulet of health* +1, masterwork composite shortbow (+1 Str bonus) with 20 cold iron arrows, *ring of protection* +1, masterwork thieves' tools

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Aramil had the following ability scores before racial adjustments, Hit Die ability score increases, and stat boosting items: Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 10.

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### Feedback

Have a spell combination you use with the spellwarp sniper? Any additional advice you would include for this prestige class? Let us know, at [dndfeedback@wizards.com](mailto:dndfeedback@wizards.com).

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### About the Author

Creighton Broadhurst is a member of [Living Greyhawk](#)'s Circle of Six and a mad-keen **World of Greyhawk** fan. His hobbies include trying to stop his house falling down (which appears to be harder than you would think) and trying to survive the Savage Tide (which appears to be harder than you would think). He can be reached at [creighton@greyworks.co.uk](mailto:creighton@greyworks.co.uk)

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